

## Engaging Local Government for Improved Bike & Pedestrian Pathways

### *Issue*

Garrett Wonders, a Charleston area bicyclist and Naval Officer, had real hopes of competing in the Olympic Games in Athens. Regretfully, Garrett was killed by a driver while riding his bike near Moncks Corner. He joined numerous others whose bicycling deaths have combined to consistently place South Carolina's roads amongst the most dangerous roads in the nation. Since the year 2000, South Carolina has had the 2nd, 3rd and 9th highest rate of bicycling deaths per capita in the United States. Active transportation is a strong link in re-engineering physical activity back into the lives of South Carolinians, but access and safety are paramount to making it more universal.

### *Intervention*

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Physical Activity Consultant, as a Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant-funded employee, re-established the Central Midlands Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee six years ago. Since that time, he has worked as chairperson with the Central Midlands Council of Governments(CMCOG) for the group. The fundamental purpose for CMCOG staff's involvement with the Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee is to assist with implementing the CMCOG *Bike & Pedestrian Pathways Plan* to improve and increase facilities for alternative modes of transportation, including bicycling, running and walking.

### *Impact*

Over the past year, the CMCOG staff and subcommittee have participated in a variety of activities in support of this goal. Highlights of these activities include:

- Continued participation in workshops and conferences, such as SCDOT's *Safe Routes To School* Training and SC Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity's *2007 Obesity Prevention Conference*;
- Since 2006, they have participated in awareness initiatives seasonally or on an on-going basis. These promotions include SCDHEC's Take a Break from the Exhaust, City of Columbia's Bike Week, Bike-To-Work Day, and Ozone Alert Season;
- Assistance to area towns and cities regarding designation of possible bike routes and locations of signage, such as staff's involvement with the City of Columbia's Bicycle Friendly Community Committee. Currently, Richland County, the City of Columbia, and Irmo have receive assistance from CMCOG regarding these issues. Also, Richland, Blythewood, Cayce, Elgin, Springdale, Calhoun County, Kershaw County, and Swansea have adopted either the CMCOG Model Resolution or the CMCOG Bike and Pedestrian Pathways Plan;
- Encouragement/outreach efforts to 19 area jurisdictions, appealing for them to incorporate the principles and design practices noted in the *Pathways Plan* in their local land development regulations; and
- Implementation of Columbia Bicycle & Pedestrian Week, designed to engage community members, elected officials, business leaders, and professional staff in the transportation planning process. The effort is designed to make the City of Columbia bicycle and pedestrian friendly, improve safety for all of Columbia bicyclists and pedestrians, and educate the city's citizens, leaders, and educators on the value and importance of bicycling and walking for healthy lifestyles and communities.

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